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Years in Cultural Studies

1956—The British New Left and the "Big Bang" Theory of Cultural Studies

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ABSTRACT In intellectual histories of cultural studies, the year 1956 usually figures as a "big bang" moment. Centered on the geopolitical flashpoints of the Hungarian Revolution and the Suez Crisis, it was the year that catalyzed the British new left, and thus, the story goes, provided a new front of political critique that would serve as the jumping-off point for the nascent formation of cultural studies in Britain. This article presents a brief overview of this conventional pre-history of cultural studies in Britain. It then departs from this familiar story to outline several other notable "big bang" moments happening elsewhere in 1956 with resonance across literature, global labor history, the visual arts, and the women's movement. These other moments each arguably have considerable bearing on the articulation of cultural studies in Britain, and their examples provide a more globally diverse and textured frame for re-situating the emergence of cultural studies at mid-century beyond the narrow focus on new left politics.

In intellectual histories of cultural studies, the year 1956 usually figures as a "big bang" moment. It was the year that catalyzed the British New Left and thus, the story goes, provided a new front of political critique that served as the jumping off point for the nascent formation of cultural studies in Britain. I use the conceit of the "big bang" advisedly, to signal the way that these commonplace histories revolve around 1956 as a moment of absolute genesis. In the process, they tend to construe the historical emergence of the New Left, as a self-identified and self-contained movement, as something which occurred all-at-once, in direct response to the eruption of two specific crises in the fateful year of 1956. In these accounts of the "big bang" of 1956, the two crises are located within a pair of geopolitical flashpoints from the closing months of that year in Eastern Europe and the Middle East. The "New Left" drift in British politics and letters that followed provided a new animus for cultural criticism and forged fresh tracks in English Marxism as an attempt to first imagine, then build, a renewed independent socialism. Ultimately, the theoretical synthesis of these two intellectual currents provided the ferment out of which British cultural studies eventually emerged as a distinct intellectual formation shaped largely in response to the twin crises of Suez and Hungary.

This article presents a brief overview of this conventional pre-history of cultural studies in Britain. It then departs from this familiar intellectual story to outline several other important "big bang" moments happening elsewhere in 1956 across literature, global labor history, the visual arts, and the women's movement. In their own ways, each of these moments would have considerable bearing on the concerns articulated by cultural studies in Britain, and globally, as they developed over the second half of the twentieth century. Their examples provide a more differently textured and globally diverse frame for situating the emergence of cultural studies at mid-century beyond a narrow focus on the New Left. As such, I want to suggest that looking to some of these pivotal moments elsewhere in 1956 might provide novel inspiration for the ways that we orient our understanding of this lightning-rod year in the history of cultural studies.

Two Crises, Two Journals

1956, it has been said, was "the year that the 'first' New Left was born."[1] But 1956, according to Stuart Hall, more than just a watershed year, represented a decisive conjuncture in postwar British social life.[2] First, 1956 witnessed the violent repression of the Hungarian revolution by the Soviet Army from November 4 to November 11. The Hungarian Uprising sought to oust the one-party Soviet-backed state of the People's Republic of Hungary and had begun as a student protest over the preceding summer months. The CPGB's public backing of Soviet actions came on the heels of the unsettling revelations in Khrushchev's "Secret Speech," which denounced the Stalinist purges of the previous regime. These developments combined to accelerate a credibility crisis within official British Communist circles. Disaffection with the atmosphere of hardline orthodoxy and recriminations associated with the CPGB had already been rife since the onset of the Cold War in the early fifties, and the incident in Hungary triggered a mass exodus of the Party's ranks. Second was the invasion and occupation by British led forces of the Suez Canal zone from October 26 to November 7. The tripartite aggression, spearheaded by Israel and then joined by Britain and France, was orchestrated as an effort to reassert economic control over the canal zone after Egypt's post-revolutionary leadership, under President Gamal Abdel Nasser, had seized and nationalized the canal in July. The British military response was widely condemned and failed to secure backing from the Eisenhower administration in the United States who felt it was politically irresponsible and might further destabilize the region in the favor of the Soviet Union. In Britain, the incident became a source of international embarrassment and came to symbolize a misguided adventurism indicative of accelerating colonial disintegration and a precipitous decline of British status within the new world order.

Retrospectively, commentators have characterized these events as exposing the deep-seated problems within both of the competing Cold War systems: Stalinist repression in the East and imperialist aggression in the West. Of course, a fuller accounting of the political histories of both regions, and the shifting balance of social forces that precipitated these "crises" would require a much more rigorous and in-depth accounting than would be appropriate to the purpose of this article. Suffice it to say that these two crises have historically been understood as opening the way within the shifting landscape of left politics in Britain during the fifties for new currents in socialist thought, by carving out a space of independent left critique that could be both anti-Stalinist and anti-imperialist.

The New Left that grew out of this conjuncture drew together several overlapping social, economic, and cultural cleavages that had been widening in Britain's postwar consensus. These cracks exposed the central contradictions animating political discourse at the time. The usual diagnosis runs as follows: traditional left organizations like the Labour Party and the Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB) found themselves unable to articulate the shifting foci of political disaffection among a working-class base that had been largely shorn of the material conditions of deprivation and hard poverty, which had functioned as old standbys for the Left's political rhetoric. By the mid-fifties however, many people in Britain were enjoying a new affluence—especially in cheap consumer goods and mass entertainments—secured by a relatively robust welfare state and economic conditions of increased professional mobility and nearly full employment.

In these circumstances, the Left found itself in search of a new rhetoric of political vision. Revisionist figures like Anthony Crosland argued that the new affluence ought to be embraced as a social good, suggesting that any rise in general prosperity was compatible with the socialist project. Crosland's influential book *The Future of Socialism* (1956) shifted the conversation away from public ownership and onto the public provision of

services, arguing that postwar gains in patterns of personal consumption for working-class people might inevitably lead to similar gains in overall social equality.[3] Somewhat paradoxically, years later Crosland cited North American sociologist Kenneth Galbraith's notable *The Affluent Society* (1958) in support of his theory. Meanwhile for most commentators in Britain, Galbraith's skeptical diagnosis was taken as a damning indictment of the economic realities underwriting the postwar social consensus by exposing the manner in which the "private opulence" of affluence concealed the persistence of "public squalor" by conflating social prosperity with commodity consumption.[4]

In the context of these debates, by 1956 a series of ideological fault lines emerged within left intellectual circles. They seemed to pose a choice between an older more rigid Labourism whose economic appeals seemed antiquated within the context of postwar affluence on the one hand, and a new currency in accommodationist, even celebratory, Crosland style revisionism on the other. In addition to the traditional left's slide towards irrelevance in domestic affairs, a host of new existential threats had emerged abroad: the specter of bureaucratic authoritarianism figured both by the supposed tyranny of the centralized state in Soviet Russia as well as the numbing conformity of American style corporate managerialism, outbreaks of destructive imperialist violence in East Asia and other parts of the "Third World," and an ever-present threat of nuclear annihilation delicately balanced on the rivalry of two foreign superpowers. In an effort to respond to these new global realities in a way that moved beyond the false choice between Labourism and Revisionism, new strains of Left thought were already beginning to take shape by the time the twin crises of Suez and Hungary shocked them into action.

However, if the twin crises of 1956 served as the moment of decisive conjunctural convulsion—elucidating a new set of cultural and political fault lines that had been developing in the decade since the close of the Second World War—the New Left only materialized as an identifiable formation between 1957 and 1959. Over the course of these years, political energies were mobilized in response to the twin crises of Suez and Hungary and the impetus to renew the socialist project in the face of postwar political realities that they inspired. When the crises broke out in the fall of 1956, what inchoate New Left there was revolved around two niche journals, one recently established and one soon-to-be: *The Reasoner* and *Universities and Left Review* (*ULR*). Each of these publications, and the coterie of students and academics involved with them, would come to form the intellectual nucleus of what is typically described as the "first" British New Left.

The group behind *The Reasoner* was drawn mostly from the ranks of academic history. An outgrowth of the activities of the Communist Party Historians Group which had been formed in 1946, *The Reasoner* first appeared in the summer of 1956. The journal was conceived as a space to think through and critique some of the issues facing the CPGB from within, by affiliated and "loyal" members without attracting the taint of anti-communism. In its original incarnation it ran for three issues and featured contributions from prominent British communists and Marxist historians such as Doris Lessing, Christopher Hill, John Saville, Rodney Hilton, Eric Hobsbawm, and E.P. Thompson. After the Soviet aggression in Hungary, many of the journal's editors and contributors broke formally with the party. Less than a year later, in the summer of 1957, the journal had re-constituted as *The New Reasoner: A Journal of Socialist Humanism* which continued publishing articles in line with the strain of dissident communism *The Reasoner* had pioneered, while also beginning to deal in occasional pieces of cultural criticism and short fiction.[5]

In character, the *Reasoner* group were most closely associated with workers movements in the north of England, especially around Yorkshire where Thompson had worked for several years as an extramural tutor in adult education programs. Their outlook was informed by a concerted effort to recover and disclose the values of an authentic tradition of English radicalism as a means of revitalizing the socialist movement in Britain for the twentieth century, for instance, Dorothy Thompson's important work on the history of Chartism or her husband E.P. Thompson's biography of William Morris, the nineteenth-century renaissance man and committed socialist who championed the Arts and Crafts Movement in Britain.[6] In his reviews for early issues of *The New Reasoner* Thompson also pointed to the native roots of popular protest and collective action in England emblematized by incidents such as the 1819 Peterloo Massacre. This intellectual project was heavily shaped by the context of the Historian's Group and the vociferous debates carried on by figures like Hill about the nature of class-antagonisms during the English Civil War, or the transition from feudalism to capitalism during the late middle-ages. In this vein, the *Reasoner* group's major contribution to the New Left has usually been understood as the formulation and elaboration of a distinctive *socialist humanism*. This particularly English flavor of Marxist humanism emerged as a repudiation of Stalinist and centralist imperatives to efface the individual, and insisted that revolutionary change could only be achieved as a genuine and lasting success by a movement that took seriously the human experience of social being and consciousness—posing their intersection as the only site upon which an effective class-based solidarity might be built.

The group that coalesced around *Universities and Left Review* were quite different in both their character and outlook. However, they too shared a similar desire to reimagine socialist politics for Britain in the twentieth century, and they were sympathetic to the humanist imperative for a theory of politics that might address "real" and "living" people. While these efforts at *The New Reasoner* tended to take their inspiration from the radical cultural traditions embedded within English working-class history, those at *ULR* looked to the radical gestures figured by the growth the new cinema and popular culture. In the main, the *ULR* group were drawn from the cosmopolitan Oxbridge set, and were culturally more attuned to the bustling London scene than the northern industrial cities. They also tended to comprise a much younger demographic as many of them were still students or postgraduates. As Hall later noted, they also represented a more culturally diverse perspective. Stuart Hall was Jamaican and had come to Oxford from Kingston in 1951, there was also a French-Canadian Charles Taylor, the American Norman Birnbaum, and Gabriel Pearson and Raphael Samuel who were both of London Jewish background. Many of them had already come to an independent socialist position as a result of their time spent in the seminars of Oxford luminary G. D. H. Cole imbibing his critiques of statist socialist models, and being schooled in what Hall describes in his reminiscence as the "cooperative and 'workers' control' traditions of Guild Socialism."[7] As a result of this student positioning, the *ULR* wing of the New Left formation also developed close ties to the youth movement and other avenues of perceived middle-class radicalism like the CND.

The first issue of *ULR* did not appear until the spring of 1957 following the tumultuous events of the previous autumn in 1956. Its inaugural issue famously called on readers to "take socialism at full stretch" by pushing to develop a critique of postwar society, and a theory of the socialist future, that could speak to and encompass the sweep of human activities and production, in culture and the media no less than in politics and the economy.[8] For many, this meant carving out a third position between Stalinism in the Eastern bloc on the one hand, and the Western revisionist style social democracy that was beginning to hold sway in the Labour party on the other. In character, the pages of *ULR* evinced a more modish radicalism than the Marxist historians behind *The*

Reasoner. For instance, the journal's first three issues featured pieces on commitment in the arts, the political potentiality of documentaries and an essay on "Free Cinema" by new wave filmmaker Lindsay Anderson, several articles tracking current developments on the Left in France and Italy, as well as coverage of rising nationalism in colonial Africa and the Middle East.[9] As Hall often fondly pointed out, *ULR* self-consciously modeled themselves on the French *nouvelle gauche* movement.[10] In addition to the journal, the *ULR* group created and maintained new intellectual spaces with the Partisan Coffeehouse and ULR Club, both located in London, where they hoped that sociality and exchange might flourish across various left traditions and constituencies.

The *ULR* group's contribution to the New Left has usually been cast in terms of its theoretical eclecticism. In truth, its most lasting impression was to commit to the *culturalist* approach to political theory that was inherent in much of the socialist humanist work being circulated *The Reasoner,* and apply it in rough and ready analyses of the new social formations and contemporary political realities unfolding in the culture before their very eyes. This type of intervention is perhaps best crystallized in Hall's well known essay "A Sense of Classlessness," where he proposed, citing Raymond Williams, a cultural frame for investigating the new coordinates of class politics in an affluent society, describing the issue as "a matter of a whole way of life, of an attitude towards things and people, within which new possessions—even a new car, a new house or a TV set—find meaning through use."[11] Cultural considerations such as these surfaced as a consistent editorial concern in a range of pieces exploring the specifically cultural stakes of contemporary political questions and scrutinizing the political role of key cultural institutions like schools and, of course, the university.[12]

From 1957 to 1960 there was widespread collaboration and partnership across the two journals, and in 1960, by all accounts for reasons having as much to do with the pooling of resources towards mutual survival as anything else, they merged to form *New Left Review* (*NLR*) with Stuart Hall presiding as editor. Over the next two years, *NLR* continued to publish critical essays on a diverse set of issues including Labour politics, social policy issues, race relations, and popular culture. By 1962 however, with a mounting exhaustion of financial and human resources, and amid rising tensions between the publication's board and editorial staff, Hall stepped down as editor. Shortly thereafter, Perry Anderson brokered a deal to rescue the journal from its dire financial straits and assumed full organizational control. Within the span of six short years the fires of '56 that had sparked the first New Left had waned and begun to go out.

The British New Left and Cultural Studies

Narratives of the birth of the "first" New Left in Britain tend to adhere to this basic outline. Given the chronological sequence of events it is unsurprising then that 1956 figures as a "big bang" moment of singular importance. As it pertains to the interwoven intellectual histories of the New Left and cultural studies in Britain, the effect has been to overlay this 1956 trajectory more or less directly onto the origin story of cultural studies itself. This frames cultural studies as a sort of aspect or consequence of the New Left. Thus, the New Left is taken to have established many of cultural studies'—at least as it appeared at Birmingham—central political commitments and theoretical concerns. Put another way, the history of the big bang for the British New Left in 1956 comes to be accepted as a kind of prehistoric narrative backdrop for the emergence of cultural studies in postwar Britain—*Cultural Studies 1956: The Prequel*.[13]

In the scholarly record, Dennis Dworkin's seminal *Cultural Marxism in Postwar Britain: History, the New Left and the Origins of Cultural Studies*, perhaps more than any other single account, has cemented the historical common sense that identifies the genesis of

both the New Left and cultural studies in the "big bang" of 1956. While the year itself does not structure his analysis directly—his study covers a much wider sweep of time stretching up into the late seventies—in his coverage of the immediate postwar period events are laid out in terms of an explicit pre- and post-1956 frame that allows him to make sense of the intellectual ferment of the fifties.[14] Likewise, other important New Left historiographies such as Lin Chun's *The British New Left* (Edinburgh UP, 1993) and Michael Kenny's *The First New Left: British Intellectuals After Stalin* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1995) hold to the same general scheme.[15] Chun's account dissects the new left in terms of three main tendencies—dissident communism, independent socialism, and theoretical Marxism—tracing the roots of all three to the twin crises of Hungary and Suez in 1956 as *the year that made* the New Left.[16] More recently, Madeleine Davis has authored several articles reevaluating the legacy of the British New Left where 1956 is cited as a pivotal starting point in investigations of the movement's engagements with Marxism, its connections to working-class communities and the work of E. P. Thompson.[17]

In addition to the scholarly tendency to foreground 1956 as year zero, this narrative has been reproduced time and again through the firsthand testimony of key actors involved with the New Left movement, as is evidenced by the remarks on 1956 from Hall quoted above. 1956 functions as a similar hinge-point in a pair of retrospective assessments from Perry Anderson and Raymond Williams published in the mid-sixties after Labour finally reattained governmental power with the election of Harold Wilson in 1964.[18] It would be foolish to deny the real, and often intimate, linkages obtaining between the histories of cultural studies and the New Left in Britain. Still, even if there are several very well-founded and clear reasons to narrate the emergence of the New Left during the "big bang" of Suez and Hungary in 1956, this does not self-apparently explain why we ought to locate our historical narratives of cultural studies within the same moment of genesis. Nonetheless, there are at least three important reasons for the habit of rooting our earliest histories of British cultural studies in the birth of the New Left during 1956.

Firstly, the theoretical contributions that grew out of the debates between Marxism and culturalism across the pages of *The New Reasoner, ULR,* and *NLR* did in fact work through what would become the major theoretical synthesis characteristic of work at the Center for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) during its most productive phase from 1968 to 1979. This consisted, in the first place, of a new definition of politics, or of *the political* as such. This new definition incorporated a sense of cultural processes, as ritual practice and communal relations, but also as commercial production and commodity consumption, as a no less central dimension of analysis than the economy, the state, or the law. This new cultural focus garnered a thorough rethinking of the classical base-superstructure model of Marxist cultural theory, resulting in theoretical efforts to construct what Chun describes as a "culturalist totality" that might re-integrate, under the rubric of socialist critique, the new configurations of power and identity in postwar society.[19] This reintegration was accomplished, in large part, with the help of newly available English translations of Gramsci's critiques of "vulgar economism," which, despite their rootedness in the context of early twentieth century Italy, provided concepts like "hegemony," "historical bloc," and "national-popular" that proved extremely useful for culturalist analyses of postwar Welfare State Britain. As Rainer Winter has pointed out, this synthesis and its institutionalization under the rubric of cultural studies performed an essential function for the New Left, especially in its second and third iterations during and after 1968, by providing the presence of a strong and radicalized sociology—a resource that had been lacking in Britain as compared with France or the United States, who by the late fifties boasted the likes of Henri Lefebvre, and C. Wright Mills respectively.[20]

Secondly, the New Left has largely come to be understood historically as an essentially *intellectual* movement more so even than it has been as a *political* one. Several factors contribute to this view. To begin with, the New Left as an "organization" was only ever concretized in the journals discussed above, and in nebulous and diffusely affiliated left-inclusive social spaces like the network of New Left Clubs. As a result, the most lasting record of their activities consists primarily of intellectual writings. Additionally, many involved with the New Left have spoken of a perceived lack of connection to working-class communities and the workers' movement. Anderson and, in slightly more guarded terms, Williams both echo this critique in their mid-sixties retrospectives.[21]

Thirdly, the exhaustion of the movement's initial wave of activity by 1964 meant that key figures from this "first" New Left, most notably Hall, transitioned away from being full-time activist organizers and part-time theorists, to being full-time academics and part-time politicos. Indeed, many of the documents conventionally earmarked as the "founding texts" of British cultural studies were published during this first New Left cycle of activity from 1956 to 1964, including Hoggart's *The Uses of Literacy* (1957), Williams's *Culture & Society* (1958) and "Culture Is Ordinary" (1958), Hall's "A Sense of Classlessness" (1958), and Thompson's *The Making of the English Working-Class* (1963). The neatness of this historical correspondence has been taken as suggestive of a continuity of intellectual energies between the first British New Left and early British cultural studies. While this seems only reasonable—especially in the case of figures like Hall, Williams, and Thompson who were centrally active within New Left publishing and organizing—there are other notable points of departure that can be traced between the "first" New Left and early British cultural studies.

The clearest exception is Richard Hoggart. The author of *The Uses of Literacy* and the CCCS's founding director, Hoggart had only tangential relations to the New Left. His work was quite far, in focus and temperament, from both the avant-garde radicalism associated with the *ULR* set and the dissident communism of the *Reasoner* group. Hoggart's own writings blended a social documentary impulse in the style of Orwell's *The Road to Wigan Pier* with the incisive approach to textual criticism pioneered by the Leavis group and *Scrutiny* during the 1930s and 1940s. In fact, Thompson, and to a lesser degree Williams, were both critical of Hoggart's book when it appeared in 1957. They especially objected to his omission of the long traditions of working-class protest and activism in his richly textured overview of English working-class culture. This left-Leavisite bent to Hoggart's perspective is well-documented as an important literary-critical tributary in the headwaters of British cultural studies. Yet despite Hoggart's centrality to the institutionalization of cultural studies and its initial program of self-definition and study, his misfit status amongst this otherwise largely New Left crowd has not served to decenter the big bang narrative of 1956.

If one lumps Hoggart in with his more radical New Left contemporaries, there appears to be a direct straight line from the "awakening" in 1956 through the simultaneous birth of the New Left and cultural studies in the keystone works listed above published from 1957 to 1964. This through line is complicated, however, when considering the composition history of these works more closely. As Alan O'Connor has noted, many of these key texts had been either mostly or entirely drafted prior to 1956:

> Williams wrote *Culture and Society* in relative isolation from 1952 to 1956. Hoggart's *The Uses of Literacy* was written from 1952 to 1955, its publication delayed because of fears of legal action over its criticism of popular writers. E. P. Thompson's monumental *William Morris* was published in 1955, and there is evidence that the chapter on the Socialist League, entitled "Making Socialists," was widely read by those who formed the New Left.[22]

Additionally, as O'Connor expands, the incidents in Hungary and Egypt were only the latest in a string of events marking an already quite turbulent decade of global left politics including "the suppression of workers in East Germany in 1953 and ongoing anti-colonial struggles in many parts of Africa" and the need to confront the ideological handcuffs of Cold War binarism had surfaced well before the violence in Budapest.[23]

Finally, one should not underestimate the extent to which Stuart Hall's colocation within the emergent stages of each of these formations—the first British New Left, and cultural studies at Birmingham—has had a determinative effect on the taken for granted shorthand of their shared origin within the same historical wellspring of 1956. Hall himself certainly experienced them as intermingling developments borne out of the same conjunctural moment, as no doubt did many others in Britain. Still, when a single voice authors the definitive accounts of "Cultural Studies and its Theoretical Legacies" and "The Life and Times of the First New Left," such wholesale mis/identification is perhaps inevitable. In a strange twist, Hall's account of the "Life and Times of the First New Left" ends by offering a contrasting view to the traditional characterization of the New Left as a mere intellectual *milieu* and instead emphasizes its importance as a short-lived but nonetheless real living political *movement* with strong and active ties to struggles amongst working-class and immigrant communities during the late fifties.[24] Taken at face value, this assessment stands at odds with the logic by which Hall's preeminent status as a protagonist of both the British New Left and cultural studies usually serves to affirm at one and the same time a) the predominantly intellectual composition of the former, and b) the politically committed practices of the latter. As Andrew Milner has argued, among the early influences shaping cultural studies as an academic field the conception of it as fundamentally an "engaged" scholarly mode of "political intervention" can largely be attributed to Hall's influence.[25] It is significant to note, also, that both Anderson and Williams' retrospectives speak of the "first" New Left in the past tense, as a decidedly historical formation, whose energies had by 1964 largely fizzled out. Of course, the student of cultural studies will recognize 1964 as the year in which Richard Hoggart founded the Center for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) at the University of Birmingham. The first British New Left, it would seem then, ends precisely where British cultural studies formally begins.

If perhaps the seductive simplicity of this historical timeline largely underwrites the twin crises narratives of a joint "big bang" in 1956, it does not adequately capture the range of interest, practice, and perspective animating the sweep of intellectual production and research of cultural studies in its earliest period at Birmingham under Hoggart's direction from 1964 to 1968. Less still, does it encompass the years leading up to the Center's founding (1956–1963) that are usually dominated by narratives of the New Left.

Elsewhere in 1956

While the historical connections between the New Left and cultural studies in Britain are no doubt important and are even in certain ways, as in Hall's case, decisive, the tendency to foreground the twin crises of Suez and Hungary as *the* key events of 1956 limits our historical understanding of the varied and diverse nature of the cultural, intellectual, and political currents of experimentation, inquiry, and concern that collided under the rubric of cultural studies as it developed over the course of subsequent decades.

In the remainder of this essay, I will suggest several other decisive "big-bang" moments from elsewhere in 1956. In doing so, I hope to signal new ways that we might approach the conjuncture that 1956 represents in order to reach beyond the narrow frame allowed by repeated retellings of the rise of the British New Left. These New Left narratives, while capturing the importance of certain ideological and intellectual debates during the late

fifties, also tend to frame the narrative in ways that privilege a certain stratum of highly educated, politically committed, British, and mostly male, intellectual voices. The alternative "big bangs" that I will suggest are drawn from across the theater, literature, the visual arts, and the women's movement, and each offer a way of reconceptualizing 1956 as a year in cultural studies. As such, the historical vignettes that follow should be taken as more suggestive than comprehensive, as invitations to imagine how centering our memory of 1956 in different ways might illuminate a different way of telling the prehistory of cultural studies. In each case, I will offer a brief summary of the key event to be discussed and examine its importance for the historical development of the concerns of cultural studies. I will then consider how refocusing 1956 around each of these moments might enable us to tell the story of cultural studies in new ways. Ways that hopefully are themselves more responsive to both the concerns of the present and the complexities of the past.

John Osborne's *Look Back in Anger* Premieres at the Royal Court Theatre, London

On May 8, 1956, Jon Osborne's three-act one-room play *Look Back in Anger* premiered to its first audience. As a singular moment in the conjuncture of 1956, it is important for providing a focal point for naming the new sensibility of what became known as the "Angry Young Men." Directed by Tony Richardson who would go on to become a prominent filmmaker in the "kitchen-sink realism" school of the British new wave, Osborne's play upturned the conventions of the Victorian drawing room production, replacing lighthearted hijinks with prolonged rants of social invective, and coarsely realist bouts of domestic bickering. While widely acknowledged as ground-breaking in its bald depiction of postwar class disaffection, the play was also considered controversial and offensive to conservative artistic tastes, famously prompting one notable critic to walk out on the performance. The term "Angry Young Men" (AYM) is most readily associated with a cycle of fiction writing during the mid to late fifties including novels like John Wain's *Hurry on Down* (1953) and Kingsley Amis's *Lucky Jim* (1954), or John Braine's *Room at the Top* (1957), and Alan Sillitoe's *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* (1958). The term has always been somewhat amorphous, but the "anger" of the movement's literature is usually understood as a response to class-based frustrations with the seemingly robust welfare state's inability to upend class distinctions or limit prewar patterns of social exclusion despite providing new standards of material comfort.

Within cultural studies there have been occasional efforts to inform our understanding of the subjective positionality of New Left and early cultural studies attitudes and dispositions with reference to the AYM. In these cases, cultural studies' relation to this culture of working-class masculine indignation has been diagnosed as an inborne weakness that sites key concepts like "the popular" and "resistance" squarely within the rebel yell of a white male English working-class. Paul Gilroy notably observed the ways in which a "thematics of identity" could be traced in a triangulating fashion between the foundational works of Williams, Hoggart, and Thompson so as to reveal the clear ways by which, "cultural development and cultural politics came to be configured as exclusively English national phenomena."[26] Similarly, Paul Smith has argued that these early circumstances of cultural filiation ultimately marred cultural studies with "a set of genetic deficits" that surface most clearly in a vision of class conflict and identity that suffers from a misguided sense of paternalism, condescension, or both.[27]

In recent literary studies, there has been a push to rearticulate not just the coincidental resonances but the deep and substantive connections between AYM fiction and early cultural studies work, especially in the writing and teaching of Richard Hoggart. Work by

scholars such as Tracy Hargreaves, Ben Clarke, Jeremy Seabrook, Peter Kalliney, Nick Bentley, and Mary Eagleton has done much to draw out the crosscurrents of production and perspective between postwar literary criticism, the politics of class and gender in AYM novels, and the pioneering critical efforts that built New Left style culturalism.[28] Of particular note in this regard is Susan Brook's *Literature and Cultural Criticism in the 1950s: The Feeling Male Body*.[29] The political and economic coordinates of the postwar welfare state which were the proving ground for culturalist interventions in left politics also enabled, in a fairly straightforward way, the postures of virile and brutal masculinity on display in AYM narratives. The displacement of social disaffection with class-based exclusion onto anxieties about domesticity and sexual dominance in these texts relied upon the fact that opportunities for men to fulfill their role as economic providers were no longer seriously threatened. As Peter Kalliney has noted, "this particular configuration of masculinity" is premised upon the material security of "the single-family home and its attendant commodities—only made realistic for the majority of the working-class during the 1950s."[30] As such, Kalliney, Brook, and others have called attention to the ways that AYM novels dramatizing these subtle shifts in the sexual economy such as Sillitoe's *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* serve as fictional corollaries to the preoccupation with bygone domestic spaces and gendered certitudes in the opening section of Hoggart's *The Uses of Literacy*.

Literary critical work of this kind might be extended to leverage our historical practices of self-narration in ways that draw attention to what Carol Stabile recognized in recent coinage as the "virilophile preference" at the heart of cultural studies historical projections of itself.[31] Refocusing the story of 1956 around key events like the premier of Osborne's play might call our attention to the cult of viriliphilism underwriting British intellectual and literary culture generally during the mid-twentieth century. This tendency sits at the beating heart of the AYM sensibility and the masculinist class politics that it endorses. The emergence of cultural studies then, might be understood as rooted not just in the political crises of Hungary and Suez, but also squarely within the perceived crisis of working-class masculinity evinced by AYM reactions to threatened forms of lower-class masculine validation in the sexual economy. More than mere coincidence, these connections between the intellectual aims of the New Left movement and new angry forays into working class drama and fiction have shaped the intellectual reproduction and transmission of cultural studies as a field in significant and lasting ways.

Samuel Selvon's *The Lonely Londoners* is Published in London and New York by St. Martin's Press

1956 also witnessed the publication of Trinidadian émigré novelist Samuel Selvon's *The Lonely Londoners.* This pathbreaking novel portrays the vicissitudes of cultural assimilation and integration in the lives of several Trinidadian and Jamaican migrants as they struggle against poverty and discrimination in employment, housing, and sociality across the mixed urban terrain of the imperial metropole. The postwar settlers depicted in the novel are intended to typify what is often referred to as the "*Windrush* generation" named after the ship *Empire Windrush*, which brought the first significant party of West Indian immigrants to England in 1948. Selvon's work attempted to capture something of the social texture of this journey for West Indian migrants, and the novel's formal aspect, as a set of interconnected but multi-perspectival vignettes within the same neighborhood, narrativizes the process through which a genuinely transnational "West Indian" identity and community was taking shape. Written in a vernacular Trinidadian dialect, the novel also stands as an important milestone in the development of Caribbean literature during the twentieth century, and was part of larger flourishing of fiction by Caribbean writers at mid-century including George Lamming, Edgar Mittelholzer, Sylvia Wynter, and Roger

Mais. Taken together these writers articulated a new social consciousness of the "West Indian" experience in postwar cities like London.

Citing Selvon's novel as a "big bang" moment might reframe the history of cultural studies in 1956 within the context of empire and global labor history. The arrival of the *Windrush* generation signaled a new pattern of postcolonial labor migration and diasporic settlement. The postwar situation was distinctive in that contrary to many of their ancestors, they came voluntarily, though commonly driven by economic necessity, and with a view to staying in Britain indefinitely as permanent settlers, rather than as colonial travelers who would eventually cycle back home. Upon arrival in England, many West Indians faced occupational downgrading, discriminatory hiring practices, and barriers to obtaining quality housing outside of a few city neighborhoods controlled by slumlords operating dilapidated properties.[32] This fraught experience of "integration" for West Indians during the postwar years reflected the harsh reality of racial attitudes in Britain at mid-century, and by the end of the decade, outbursts of racial violence against minority communities had become semi-regular occurrences. These tensions culminated in the Notting Hill Race Riots of 1958, which saw wide spread looting, property damage, and physical violence perpetrated against West Indian communities in parts of northwest London. Following the violence, race become a fundamental issue and recurrent flashpoint in British politics that grew steadily throughout the sixties and seventies as the new coordinates of "post-imperial" British identity took shape.

British cultural studies too, emerged out of this ferment, yet the *Windrush* generation and the racial tumult of the fifties often figures only tangentially in histories of cultural studies. Stuart Hall's own biography once again looms large. As a member of the *Windrush* generation himself, Hall experienced many aspects of the same culture of racism when he arrived as a Rhodes scholar at Oxford in 1951. However, despite his abiding interest in the literary experimentation of writers like Selvon,[33] Hall's own comfortable middle-class Jamaican upbringing and his relatively privileged cultural status amongst Oxbridge intellectual circles has meant that his own biography has sometimes functioned as an uneasy stand-in for the working-class migrant communities of West Indians laboring in menial, manual, and often night shift jobs as custodians or transport workers in England's urban centers. Still, the New Left and student activists—Hall among them—played an active role during and after the riots, setting up a New Left Club in Notting Hill and organizing for safety in the neighborhoods most effected. Outside of this New Left frame, when locating the emergence of cultural studies in Britain we might draw upon Clair Willis' sweeping work in *Lovers & Strangers: An Immigrant History of Post-War Britain* as readily as we do Hoggart's *Uses of Literacy*.[34]

Viewing 1956 as the "big bang" of the West Indian novel might also help us to situate the engaged and interventionist intellectual work normally associated with cultural studies in relation to the already longstanding traditions of community advocacy and race activism among London's Afro-Caribbean diaspora prior to the birth of the New Left. Venerable bodies such as Harold Moody's League of Colored Peoples (LCP) date to 1931, and Britain was a vibrant hub for the highly active Pan-African movement all throughout the 1930s and 1940s, hosting the movement's most radical congress at Manchester in 1945. The work of notable feminist activists like the playwright and poet Una Marson, who created the *Caribbean Voices* radio program on the BBC, and the journalist and community organizer Claudia Jones, who founded *The West Indian Gazette* (Britain's first black press) and helped established the inaugural Notting Hill Carnival in the wake of the riots, were of central importance for establishing the cultural platforms and infrastructure that enabled novels like Selvon's to constitute a broad public audience.

Connections might be drawn too, to the long and rich intellectual history of black radicalism across the Atlantic world. Recent scholarship in the history of social movements like Marc Matera's *Black London: The Imperial Metropolis and Decolonization in the Twentieth Century* tackles both these areas, chronicling the spaces of intellectual sociality and productivity among black internationalist and anti-colonial intellectuals in London in political activism, higher education, popular music, and film. Moreover, the writings of Pan-African communists such as George Padmore and C.L.R. James in their analyses of the economies of colonialist exploitation, the historical legacies of slavery, and contemporary culture, made signal and important contributions not just to the intellectual traditions of black radical thought, but of central importance to Western Marxism generally.

This Is Tomorrow Exhibit by the Independent Group (IG) Shows at the Whitechapel Art Gallery

From August 8 to September 9, 1956 a new movement in contemporary art theory and practice unveiled itself to the world. The exhibit, entitled *This Is Tomorrow*, showcased work from a collective known as The Independent Group (IG) composed of young visual artists, architects, and art critics including Lawrence Alloway, Reynar Banham, Alison and Peter Smithson, Richard Hamilton, and Eduardo Paolozzi. From 1952 to 1955 the IG functioned as what some commentators have described as the "unruly research-and-development arm" of the Institute for Contemporary Art (ICA), more a "multifarious study group" than a cohesive style.[35] Holding meetings at the ICA in London during the early fifties, they engaged in discussions examining the unfolding complex of relations between media, materiality, and everyday life in postwar society. In addition to grappling with the impact of science and engineering on modern design, the IG were interested in excavating and exploring the libidinal economies of desire underwriting popular cultures, and members like Hamilton revived Dada collage techniques layering images from Hollywood, the world of automobile design, and advertisements for consumer goods and household appliances to stage, as Alloway would later put it, "the drama of possessions."[36]

In contrast to contemporaneous examinations like Richard Hoggart's *The Uses of Literacy*, the IG took a more open and positive view towards popular culture and Americanization that made Hoggart's analysis appear stodgy and conservative by comparison. As Dick Hebdige noted, the success of pop art and its quickly appropriated commercial absorption can make it hard for us to recognize today just how hostile and radical its gesture was in 1956.[37] The kind of irreverent "pop"-culturalism that the IG effected was in sharp contrast to not only the traditional values in the culture at large and the conventional sensibility within the institutionalized art world, but also to the emerging New Left culturalist discourse around the impasse of class consciousness and social antagonism in a postwar world stripped of want.

The exhibit itself was divided into installations presenting work from twelve different working groups produced separately and without coordinated direction. As such, the final exhibit installations displayed a wide range of work—even for the eclectic sensibility of the IG—dealing in various themes and across different media. Several of the exhibits, especially those from group two and group twelve evinced aspects of a new shared sensibility, one that drew on the innovations of earlier artists like Duchamp to explore the changing modes of sensory perception in the postwar world. For instance, group two's installation with contributions from Hamilton, John McHale, and John Voelcker contained a striking integration of image and space including a "sixteen-foot-high image of Robbie the Robot; Marilyn Monroe, her skirt flying, in a scene from *The Seven Year Itch;* the giant bottle of Guinness; the spongy floor that, when stepped on, emitted strawberry air

freshener; the optical illusion corridor . . . the jukebox; and the reproduction of Van Gogh's *Sunflowers*" that unsurprisingly drew much attention.[38] Meanwhile, group twelve's space featuring work from Geoffrey Holroyd and Lawrence Alloway took its inspiration from information theory, presenting "a didactic display on the process of connecting found images" alongside a tack board which displayed continuously changing sets of pages torn from magazines.[39]

In many ways, the IG's work presages what would become perennial preoccupations for much of cultural studies. A view of the consuming subject as *actively* engaged in a dynamic relation with the forces of mass cultural production rather than as its merely passive victim resonates with the studies conducted on youth and subcultures at CCCS, and the IG's sense of the mass culture industries presenting an entirely new mode of cultural perception and spectatorship anticipates the as yet untranslated essays of Walter Benjamin. This is especially true of North America, where Alloway's work as a curator and critic in New York during the sixties helped grow the pop art scene in the United States, enjoining and stimulating new critical energies already at work in the writings of an up-and-coming generation of popular culture critics like Susan Sontag, Leslie Fiedler, and Robert Warshow. Pop art offered these American voices a way out of the dour tedium of the mass culture debates dominating critical discussions of television, comic books, Hollywood cinema, and pulp fiction at the time by posing a critique of the interlocking structures of economy, desire, and technology that was at once playful and incisive.

When considering the story of cultural studies in 1956, one novel conclusion we might draw from the "big bang" of *This Is Tomorrow* is to see the IG as engaged, through their art practice, in a kind of proto-cultural study of commercial mass culture using the exhibit space and catalogue essay rather than the journal or the book as their forms of intellectual expression. As Daniel Horowitz has observed, the IG were steeped in postwar currents of social and communications theory, drawing critical inspiration from works such as Norbert Weiner's *Cybernetics* (1948), David Riesman's *The Lonely Crowd* (1950) and Marshall McLuhan's *The Mechanical Bride* (1951).[40] For instance, one of the installations at the *This Is Tomorrow* exhibit presented itself as "a diagram which on the left began with the 'source' of a symbol, moved to an 'encoder,' then to a 'signal' between one "field of experience" and another, and then on the right to a "decoder" and then finally to a "destination."[41]

Positioning the IG as intellectual forerunners of cultural studies might also help unseat entrenched narrative habits in their treatment by art historians. As Anne Massey has argued, art historians' habit of viewing the IG in terms of a "patrilineage of pop" serves to cement its place in art historical time, but undermines its significance as a far-reaching and multi-faceted "response to modernity" more generally. In response, her work proposes "to link [the IG] sideways, across the cultural continuum" taking "a trans-disciplinary approach" that might "establish the work of the Independent Group within a much broader disciplinary context than that of art history."[42] Taking this kind of horizontal approach might also realize the avowals of equivalency with regards to artists and intellectuals found in the pages of *ULR* as well, an aspect which the tendency to privilege the political writings and activism of the first New Left in prehistories of British cultural studies has obscured rather than highlighted.[43]

The Historic Women's March in Pretoria, South Africa

On August 9, 1956 a historic march against apartheid descended upon the Union Buildings at South Africa's government center in Pretoria. As many as 20,000 women drawn from a broad-based coalition across racial and ethnic lines participated in the action. The march was mobilized in response to the extension of the discriminatory "pass

laws." These laws represented one of the first efforts to legally institutionalize and enforce the National Party's segregationist apartheid doctrine after its rise to power in 1948. First re-developed in 1952, the pass system required non-white citizens to carry "pass-books" denoting their racial status and tracking whatever economic and civil privileges they did or *did not* enjoy. The implementation of these laws effectively criminalized the non-white population, subjecting them to constant physical harassment and forcible transportation, barring them from certain employment and restricting free movement.[44] When in 1955 the government announced plans to impose pass-book laws for all African women by 1956, fearing the sexual abuse at the hands of police this would license and the loss of crucial sources of casual employment that it would inevitably entail, women raised their voices across the country in vehement dissent.

The march on Pretoria was organized by the Women's League of the ANC and the Federation of South African Women (FEDSAW). Founded in 1954, FEDSAW played a central role in the foundation of the anti-apartheid movement, taking a leading role in the Defiance Campaign, and contributing to the Congress of the People at Kliptown in 1955 that produced the historic Freedom Charter, grounding the core-principles of the anti-apartheid movement for decades after.[45] The 1956 Women's March brought together activist energies from across the broad coalition of groups struggling against apartheid including indigenous groups, the Indian community, the trade union movement, and progressive democrats, to challenge not only racial inequality, but the specific weight of women's oppression under apartheid rule. Key leaders within the movement like Lillian Ngoyi also forged links with internationalist feminist organizations like the Women's International Democratic Federation (WIDF) whose influence would help sustain global networks of solidarity between women's organizers across the second and third worlds throughout the Cold War, sponsoring several conferences and workshops in the late seventies and eighties that helped advance an anti-capitalist critique of women's oppression that recognized globalizing market forces and neo-colonialism as central structures of patriarchal power.[46]

For cultural studies, framing 1956 in terms of events like the march in South Africa offer ways of countering the accepted narratives which displace feminist protest from our early histories of the field, deferring them to the no doubt overdue women's intervention within the context of practice at the CCCS, which often figures as a signpost in stories derived from accounts of the closing phase of Hall's directorship in the late seventies.[47] Grounding the prehistory of cultural studies in the context of a burgeoning global women's movement might also combat the long decried habit within histories of the field to, as Elizabeth Long noted in 1989, exclude and marginalize its own feminist practitioners[48]—many of whose work was highlighted by Sarah Franklin, Celia Lury, and Jackie Stacy in their important collection *Off-Centre: Feminism and Cultural Studies* (1991) which collects research by feminists at the CCCS on popular culture, science, and the media. Similar inquires formed an important dimension of the center's earliest phases, a fact further attested to in in recent work from Dworkin.[49] Moreover, it guides our attention to the oft-overlooked role of women within the British New Left itself.

In the annals of the British New Left the names of Sheila Benson, Dorothy Wedderburn, Jean McCrindle, or Lynn Segal—to name only a few, who happen to have written about their experiences—rarely appear alongside Stuart Hall, Edward Thompson, and Raymond Williams. This omission speaks to what McCrindle famously described in 1987 as "an almost pathological absence of women" on the mastheads, and in the pages, of the movement's key journals like *The New Reasoner, ULR* and *New Left Review* that belies their centrality to the political activities and organizational leadership of the

movement.[50] McCrindle herself served as the coordinator for the Scottish New Left Clubs, Benson was active in the global women's movement working at the WIDF in East Berlin from 1955-56 before becoming an instrumental figure in the London New Left Club serving on its executive committee, and Wedderburn, a regular speaker at CND rallies, later contributed to the *May Day Manifesto* in 1968.[51] In part, Benson suggests, radical women were drawn to the New Left precisely because its structure and activities seemed overwhelmingly hospitable to women's involvement by comparison with the attitudes of traditional socialist groups such as the Labour Party or the trade unions.[52] In her own reflections Segal suggests that this disjuncture between women's perceived experience of the movement and posterity's blindness to their contributions within it, is symptomatic of the wider atmosphere of "mistrust and hostility" between the sexes during the fifties. This same hostility animated much of the popular AYM novels alluded to above, at a time when abortion remained illegal and most people lacked access to contraception.[53]

Finally, centering our story of 1956 on the "big bang" of the Women's March in South Africa represents a challenge to how we construct intellectual histories more generally. Few disciplines have done more to consolidate ideological narratives of masculine dominance and power than history. And within the practice of historiography perhaps no subfield has been as profoundly, even embarrassingly, besot with a masculinist perspective than intellectual history. Text-bound accounts of singular genius authors or select groups of coterie writers and their audiences offer the most well-trod strategies for centering intellectual historical narratives. In a subfield that also suffers from a bias towards the thought of early modern Europe, these approaches favor certain modes of professional activity that have been historically inhospitable to full participation by women as unsung scholars in their own right. They also obscure other forms of work done by intellectuals—whether construed as individuals, or groups of individuals engaged in the labor of political or cultural struggle—as artists, organizers, and interlocutors within social movements and political milieus. A recent counterexample to these disciplinary habits can be found in the work of scholars like Kristen Ghodsee whose latest book, *Second World, Second Sex: Socialist Women's Activism and Global Solidarity during the Cold War* offers a more socially grounded history of intellectual struggle in its excavation of the work of women activists in Bulgaria and Zambia during the UN Decade for Women as they navigated state institutions and international relations to champion women's rights and promote an analysis of patriarchal oppression as embedded within global structures of capitalist exploitation and imperialist conquest.[54] Historical accounts like Ghodsee's stand as illuminating examples of the myriad ways we might re-narrate the stories we tell about cultural studies, locating early research on the role of gender in popular culture, the media, and medicine within a wider history of the global women's movement.

Conclusion

Hopefully these brief historical glosses of alternative "big bang" moments elsewhere in 1956 have demonstrated that although the geopolitical crises of Suez and Hungary may have lit the fires of several latent left activist formations, catalyzing them into a "new" left coalition of independent socialism in Britain, the coordinates of a new *cultural* politics unfolding around race relations, consumerism, everyday life, social class, and women's oppression were already at play as fracturing axes in the conjuncture of British, and indeed global, social life during the 1950s.

While the well-worn list of canonical texts by Hoggart, Williams, Thompson, or Hall attempted to capture these energies and concerns, they did not inaugurate them *as concerns* in the first place. Nor, it could arguably be said, did they always originate them in theory. The theory of culture enacted, albeit in mediated and aestheticized form, by Selvon's *The Lonely Londoners*, the IG's *This Is Tomorrow,* or through the opposing

politics of gendered difference represented by the AYM's cult of virility and the FEDSAW activists in South Africa, might be treated as progenitors of the field's central concerns and preoccupations—emblematic of both its hereditary shortcomings and its horizons of possibility.

Of course, these are only four events plucked from a multitude of aesthetic and critical interventions and labor in struggle by intellectuals across the globe. For example, in the American context one might also point to key flashpoints in the fight for civil rights in the South or Elvis Presley's first televised appearance on *The Ed Sullivan Show* as embodying equally determinative turns in the intellectual history of cultural studies beyond the centrality of the New Left. In this sense, the importance of New Left politics for the emergence of cultural studies might be reconceived. Rather than treating the "first" New Left as privileged progenitors of the politics of cultural studies, we might describe their role as one which provided, for a short time from 1957 to 1964, a discrete frame of political analysis, and in their journals, a platform for articulating a response to a whole range of anxieties, interventions, and contestations already under way in postwar culture and society that would prove to be of significant import to the work and aims of cultural studies in the years following 1964.

Notes

1. Stuart Hall, "The Life and Times of the First New Left," *New Left Review* 61 (Jan-Feb 2010): 177–196.
2. Hall, "Life and Times," 177.
3. Stuart Middleton, "'Affluence' and the Left in Britain, c.1958–1974," *English Historical Review* 129, no. 536 (February 2014): 110.
4. For a fuller account of these debates around the meaning and implications of "affluence" for left political discussions in the immediate postwar period and beyond, see the above article in its entirety: Stuart Middleton, "'Affluence' and the Left in Britain," 107–138.
5. For my characterization of the background of *The Reasoner* and *Universities & Left Review* as well as the characterization of their members and editorial content, I have largely relied upon Dennis Dworkin's account in *Cultural Marxism in Postwar Britain: History, the New Left, and the Origins of Cultural Studies* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1997). For a more detailed recounting of the birth of this moment of two crises and two journals as I've conceptualized it here see especially his Chapter 1 "Lost Rights" (10–44) and Chapter 2 "Socialism at Full Stretch" (45–78).
6. In fact, Morris was the object of Thompson's first scholarly book, an intellectual biography: *William Morris* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1955). Dorothy Thompson was another leading figure in the Historian's Group active around *The New Reasoner*, and she later published important work on the history of English radicalism examining the Chartist movement. See Dorothy Thompson, *The Early Chartists* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1971) and *The Chartist Experience: Studies in Working-Class Radicalism and Culture 1830–60* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1982).
7. Hall, "Life and Times," 178.
8. Editorial Statement, *Universities and Left Review* 1, no. 1 (Spring 1957).
9. Claude Bourdet, "The French Left," *Universities and Left Review* 1, no. 1 (Spring 1957): 13–16; Lelio Basso, "The Italian Left," *Universities and Left Review* 1, no. 2 (Summer 1957): 23–26; Lindsay Anderson, "Free Cinema," *Universities and Left Review* 1, no. 2 (Summer 1957): 52–52; M. S. Hasan, "Nationalism and the Middle East Economy," *Universities and Left Review* 1, no. 3 (Winter 1958): 19–22; Karel

Reisz, "A Use for Documentary," *Universities and Left Review* 1, no. 3 (Winter 1958): 23–26.

10. Hall, "Life and Times," 178.
11. Stuart Hall, "A Sense of Classlessness," *Universities and Left Review* 1, no. 5 (Autumn 1958), 26.
12. There are numerous examples of this general trend across the entire run of *Universities and Left Review*, including several pieces by Raymond Williams. However, some notable early examples that engage explicitly with the category of culture include John Dixon & Sidney Lubin, "Schools, Class, Society" *Universities and Left Review* 1, no. 2 (Summer 1957); Michael Kullman, "The Anti-Culture Born of Despair," *Universities and Left Review* 1, no. 4 (Summer 1958); and Graham Martin, "A Culture In Common," *Universities and Left Review* 1, no. 5 (Autumn 1958).
13. Several scholarly articles that position themselves as offering excurses in the "prehistory" of cultural studies (one in terms of the role of "theory" and the other examining the influence of Charles Taylor) reproduce the moment of 1956 as an origin for the field. Specifically, see Simon During, "Socialist Ends: The British New Left, Cultural Studies and the Emergence of Academic 'Theory,'" *Postcolonial Studies* 10, no. 1 (2007): 23–39, and Marc Caldwell, "Charles Taylor and the Pre-History of British Cultural Studies," *Critical Arts* 23, no. 3 (2009): 342–373. Similarly, although the twin crises of 1956 are not specifically mentioned, Lawrence Grossberg's account of this "normative history" glosses the emergence of the field as an outgrowth of this same 1950s New Left moment. See Lawrence Grossberg, "The Formations of Cultural Studies: An American in Birmingham," in *Relocating Cultural Studies: Developments in Theory and Research*, ed. Valda Blundell, John Shepherd, and Ian Taylor (London: Routledge, 1993), 21–66.
14. To single out just a few key instances from Dworkin's account as evidence, take for example his framing of the move towards de-Stalinization in the activities and writing of English Marxist historians and Communist Party affiliates like E.P. Thompson: "Thompson's work felt the effects of an uncritical acceptance of the Party's version of politics and theory. . . . It was not until 1956 that he began to openly question it" (Dworkin, 22); and "After 1956, historians and cultural theorists became acutely aware of the conflict between structure and agency, determinism and freedom in Marxism" (Dworkin, 27).
15. Lin Chun, *The British New Left* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1993); Michael Kenny, *The First New Left: British Intellectuals After Stalin* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1995).
16. Chun, *British New Left*, 1–19.
17. Madeline Davis, "The Marxism of the British New Left," *Journal of Political Ideologies* 11, no. 3 (2006): 335–358; Madeline Davis, "The Origins of the British New Left," in *1968 in Europe: A History of Protest and Activism, 1956–1977*, ed. Martin Klimke and Joachim Scharloth (London: Palgrave, 2008): 45–56; Madeline Davis, "'Among the ordinary people': New Left Involvement in Working Class Political Mobilization 1956–1968," *History Workshop Journal* 86 (2018): 133–159.
18. I'm referring here to the two widely referenced and influential retrospective essays written by Raymond Williams and Perry Anderson, both published in the second iteration of *New Left Review* under Anderson's editorship. See Perry Anderson, "The Left in the Fifties," *New Left Review* 29 (Jan-Feb 1965): 3–18; Raymond Williams, "The British Left" *New Left Review* 30 (Mar-Apr 1965): 18–26.
19. Chun, *British New Left*, 27.

20. Rainer Winter, "The Politics of Cultural Studies: The New Left and the Cultural Turn in the Social Sciences and Humanities," in *A Revolution of Perception: Consequences and Echoes of 1968*, ed. Ingrid Gilcher-Holtey (New York & Oxford: Berghahn, 2014), 151.
21. Anderson, "Left in the Fifties," 16; Williams, "British Left," 22.
22. Alan O'Connor, "The New Left and the Emergence of Cultural Studies," in *British Marxism and Cultural Studies: Essays on a Living Tradition*, ed. Phlip Bounds and David Berry (London: Routledge, 2016), 45.
23. O'Connor, "The New Left," 45.
24. Hall, "Life and Times," 190–196.
25. Andrew Milner, "Left Out? Marxism, the New Left and Cultural Studies," in *Again Dangerous Vision: Essays in Cultural Materialism*, ed. J.R. Burgmann (Leiden & Boston: Brill, 2018), 341.
26. Paul Gilroy, "British Cultural Studies and the Pitfalls of Identity," in *Cultural Studies & Communications*, ed. James Curran and David Morley (London: Arnold, 1996), 44.
27. Paul Smith, "Birmingham—Urbana-Champaign 1964–1990 or, Cultural Studies," in *A Companion to Critical and Cultural Theory*, ed. Imre Szeman, Sarah Blacker, and Justin Sully (Hoboken: Wiley Blackwell, 2017), 60.
28. See Tracy Hargreaves, "The Uses of Literacy, the 'Angry Young Men' and British New Wave," in *Richard Hoggart: Culture and Critique*, ed. Michael Bailey and Mary Eagleton, (London: Critical Cultural and Communications Press, 2011); Jeremy Seabrook, "Richard Hoggart and Working-Class Virtues," in *Richard Hoggart: Culture and Critique*. See also Nick Bentley, *Radical Fictions: The English Novel in the Fifties* (Peter Lang AG, 2007); Ben Clarke et al., eds. *Understanding Richard Hoggart: A Pedagogy of Hope* (Hoboken, Wiley Blackwell, 2012).
29. Susan Brook, *Literature and Cultural Criticism in the 1950s: The Feeling Male Body* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007).
30. Peter Kalliney, "Cities of Affluence: Masculinity, Class, and the Angry Young Men," *Modern Fiction Studies* 47, no. 1 (Spring 2001): 105.
31. Carol A. Stabile, quoted in Robert W. Gehl, "Introduction: Years in Cultural Studies," *Lateral* 8, no. 1 (2019).
32. Ron Ramdin, *The Making of the Black Working Class in Britain* (London: Verso, 2017), 187–232.
33. In an early essay, the young Stuart Hall gave an enthusiastic appraisal of Selvon's work, arguing that a West Indian novel like *The Lonely Londoners* "emerges as an indigenous art form in our society," a crucial step in "the process of creating an independent cultural ethos in the West Indies" through "the evolution of new creative forms and institutions." Stuart Hall, "Lamming, Selvon and Some Trends in the West Indian Novel," *BIM* 6, no. 23 (1955): 172.
34. Clair Willis, *Lovers & Strangers: An Immigrant History of Post-War Britain* (London: Penguin, 2017).
35. Hal Foster et al., *Art Since 1900*, vol. 2, *1945 to the Present*, 3rd ed. (New York: Thames & Hudson, 2016), 447.
36. Lawrence Alloway, quoted in Daniel Horowitz, *Consuming Pleasures: Intellectuals and Popular Culture in the Postwar World* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012), 200.

37. Dick Hebdige, *Hiding in The Light: On Images and Things* (London: Routledge, 1988), 125.
38. David Robbins, ed., *The Independent Group: Postwar Britain and the Aesthetics of Plenty* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1990), 139.
39. Robbins, The Independent Group, 147.
40. Horowitz, *Consuming Pleasures*, 206.
41. Horowitz, *Consuming Pleasures*, 211.
42. Anne Massey, *Out of The Ivory Tower: The Independent Group and Popular Culture* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013), 10–11.
43. Stuart Hall quoted in Dworkin, *Cultural Marxism*, 58–59.
44. Simon Hall, *The World in Revolt* (1956; New York & London: Pegasus Books, 2015), 228–230.
45. Hall, *1956*, 230–232.
46. For a fuller accounting of the pivotal role the WIDF played in organizing global networks of socialist feminist solidarity during the 1970s and 1980s, see Kristen Ghodsee, *Second World, Second Sex: Socialist Women's Activism and Global Solidarity during the Cold War* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2019).
47. See Stuart Hall, "Cultural Studies and the Centre: Some Problematics and Problems," *Culture, Media, Language*, ed. Stuart Hall, Dorothy Hobson, Andrew Lowe, and Paul Willis (London: Hutchinson, 1980): 15–17. See also Charlotte Brundson, "A Thief in the Night: Stories of Feminism in the 1970s at CCCS," in *Stuart Hall: Critical Dialogues in Cultural Studies*, ed. David Morley and Kuan-Hsing Chen (London: Routledge, 1996), 276–286.
48. Elizabeth Long, "Feminism and Cultural Studies." *Critical Studies and Media Communication* 6, no. 4 (1989): 427.
49. Sarah Franklin, Celia Lury, and Jackie Stacy, eds., *Off-Centre: Feminism and Cultural Studies* (London: Harper Collins, 1991); Dennis Dworkin, "The Lost World of Cultural Studies, 1956–1971—An Intellectual History," *Cultural Studies 50 Years On: History, Practice and Politics*, ed. Matthew Hilton and Kieran Connell (London: Rowman & Littlefield, 2016), 3–24.
50. Jean McCrindle quoted in Lynne Segal, "Look Back in Anger: Men in the Fifties," in *Male Order: Unwrapping Masculinity, edited by Rowena Chapman and Jonathan Rutherford* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1988), 68–96.
51. Sheila Benson, Lynne Segal, and Dorothy Wedderburn, "Women in the New Left," Verso Books, last modified October 26, 2017, https://www.versobooks.com/blogs/3460-women-in-the-new-left.
52. Benson, Segal, and Wedderburn, "Women in the New Left."
53. Benson, Segal, and Wedderburn, "Women in the New Left."
54. Kristen Ghodsee, *Second World, Second Sex: Socialist Women's Activism and Global Solidarity during the Cold War* (Durham: Duke UP, 2019).

Bio Twitter

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intersections of intellectual cultures, labor, and literature during the 20th century. His work has been published in *The Los Angeles Review of Books* on Richard Hoggart and the politics of working-class studies. His dissertation, "The Uses of Culture: Intellectual Labor and the Sources of Cultural Studies in Britain and America, 1945-1964" offers an alternative critical history of the emergence of cultural studies in postwar Britain, turning to sources in Anglophone fiction, the visual arts, and North American social science

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